

Reinaldo Vera: The endgames of Carlsen: The King imprisoned

“After an interesting tactical skirmish in the middlegame I maintained the pressure in the endgame, and it paid off, as it often does.” (Magnus Carlsen)

Concept

For most of the coaches is rather difficult to motivate the young players to study the endgame, because it is incorrectly considered as bored. However to be a good endgame player is in these days even more important to be successful because the time controls that rules now are shorter than in past times.

Up to now the excellence in the endgame has been associated to names as Capablanca, Karpov or Andersson among others, but a very young hero has arrived to give his example to the new generations: Magnus Carlsen.

In the current and new World Champion we can find all the main qualities of the chess excellence, but it is the endgames where he overcomes all his nearest opponents in the world arena. He has shown that it is possible to win games after equalized opening and middle games if we are able to keep continuous pressure on the opponent in the endgame.

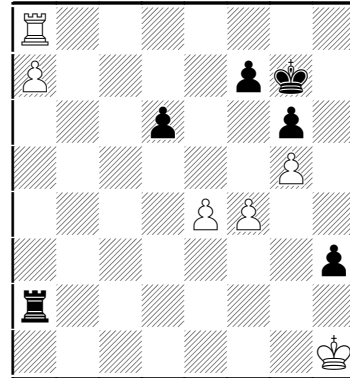
This pattern of being always pressing and of excellence in the endgame is the one that we trainers must give to our pupils.

For this there is nothing better than to study the endgames of Carlsen, emphasizing his methods and the principles that rule this phase of the game in order to motivate the students to go deeper in the study of the endgame.

Let us see some examples from the current World Champion in which he exploits a very little treated theme in the endgames: the lock up of the opponent King. We all have learned that in the endgame we must put our King in the center, but Carlsen is

able to avoid the King of his opponent to do it.

Carlsen M. : Aronian L.
Nice 2010



A simple example of the King imprisoned in the endgame.

56.f5!

After this move, Black cannot avoid his King to be reduced to h7, leaving White with a King of advantage!

56...Kh7

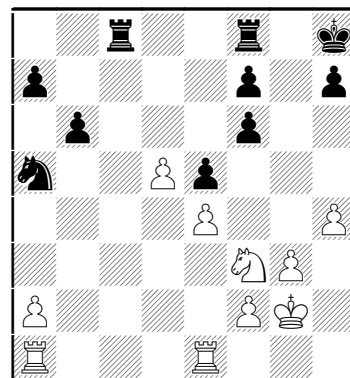
Even worse is 56...gf5? 57.ef5 d5 58.f6 Kh7 59.g6! winning.

57.f6! h2 58.Rf8 Ra7 59.Kh2 Rb7 60.Kg3

The King goes to the black pawns. The remaining is simple.

60...Ra7 61.Kf4 Rb7 62.Ke3 Ra7 63.Kd4 Rc7 64.Re8 Ra7 65.Kd5 Ra5 66.Kd6 Ra6 67.Ke7 Ra7 68.Kf8 1:0.

Carlsen M. : Aronian L.
Elista 2007



22.h5!

This advance has two objectives: at first to let the knight to move to f5 and second, to prepare an original trapping of the black King.

22...Nc4 23.Nh4 Nd6 24.h6!

Avoiding the participation of the King in the battle. Such pawn advances must be carefully evaluated, because they can become in an easy prey for the opponent pieces. In this case, the pawn of h6 acts as a lock for the black King and, as we shall see, his role is going to be very important as a support for the penetration of the white Rook.

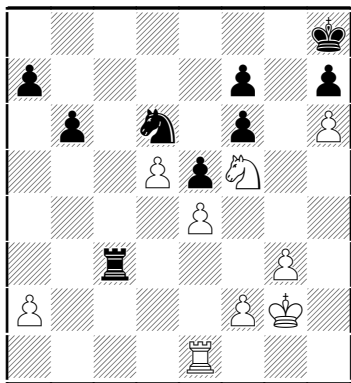
24...Rc3

Both, 24...Rc4 as 24...Rfd8 were better.

25.Rac1 Rfc8

In his great book Fighting Chess with Magnus Carlsen, GM Mikhalchishin gives a beautiful variation refuting 25...Ne4. Let us see: 26.Nf5 Rd8 27.Rc3 Nc3 28.d6 b5 29.Rc1 b4 30.a3 a5 31.ab4 ab4 32.Rc2 Kg8 33.Rb2 Rb8 34.Rb4! Rb4 35.d7! winning.

26.Rc3 Rc3 27.Nf5!



After the exchange of knights in f5 the White pawns of h6 and f5 limit the mobility of the black King.

27...Nf5 28.ef5 Kg8

Trying to escape, but now the pawn of h7 is going to fall leaving free to his opponent in h6.

29.Re4! Kf8 30.Rg4 Rc7 31.Rg7 b5

32.Rh7 Kg8 33.Rg7 Kh8

33...Kf8? 34.Rg4! and the pawn crowns.

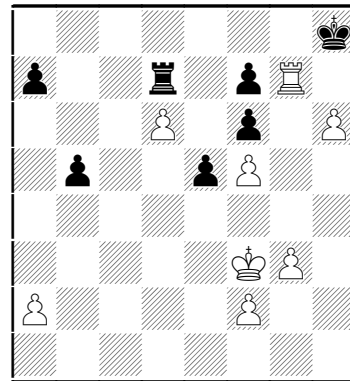
34.d6 Rd7

After 34...Rb7 the spectacular inhering of the King decides: 35.Kf3 b4 36.Ke4 a5

37.Kd5 a4 38.Kc6 b3 39.Kb7 b2 40.d7 b1Q 41.Kc7 Qc1 42.Kd8 Qh6.

(Mikhalchishin gives 42...Qc5 43.Rf7 Qd6 44.Ke8 Qc6 45.Re7 and the white King hides in g6.) 43.Ke7 Kg7 44.d8Q Kh7 45.Qe8 winning.

35.Kf3!



Once again the King of the strong side takes profit over his captive counterpart developing a lethal activity.

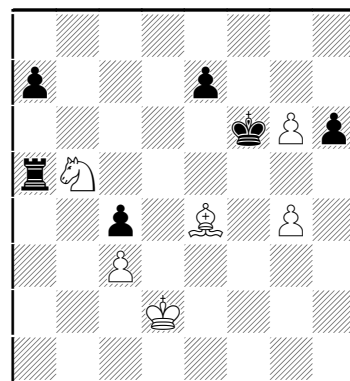
35...b4 36.Ke4

Now Black must take in d6 and so let down the defense of the seventh rank.

36...Rd6 37.Rf7 Ra6 38.g4! Kg8 39.h7 Kh8 40.g5!

Freeing the f pawn and the white King. **40...fg5 41.f6 1:0.**

Carlsen M. : Cheparinov I.
Khanty-Mansiysk 2007



44.Nc7!

The black King is forced to come inside his own prison.

44...Kg7 45.Ne6 Kh8

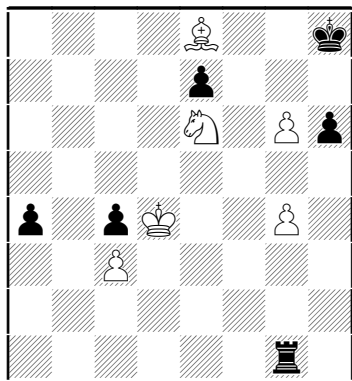
The black King is imprisoned, so White

has a King of advantage.

46.Ke3 Ra1

If 46...Re5 47.g7 Kg8 48.Kd4 Re6 49.Bd5 wins.

47.Kd4 a5 48.Bc6 a4 49.Be8 Rg1



50.g5! a3 51.Bf7 Rg5! 52.Ng5 hg5

If 52...a2? 53.Ne6 a1Q 54.g7 Kh7 55.g8Q#.

53.Bc4 Kg7 54.Kd3?

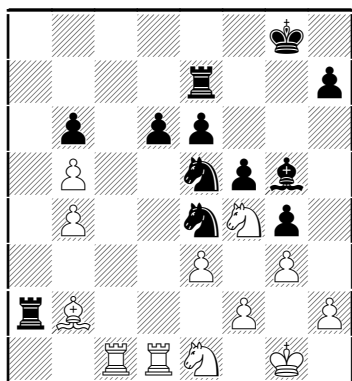
The victory went after mobilizing the c pawn. Zagrebelny gave a beautiful variation: 54.Ke5! Kg6 55.Ba2 Kh5 56.c4 g4 57.Kf4 Kh4 58.c5 g3 59.Kf3 Kh3 60.c6 g2 61.c7 g1Q 62.c8Q Kh4 63.Qh8 and the black queen is lost.

54...Kg6 55.Kc2 g4 56.Kb3 Kf5 57.Ka3

And White won latter after mistakes from both side. **1:0.**

Kramnik V. : Carlsen M.

Wijk aan Zee 2008



The ending is better for Black because of the pressure in the seventh Rank and mainly of the action of his pieces and advanced pawns that limits the white King.

32.Rc8 Kf7 33.Nfd3

33.Be5 is not enough to equalize: 33...de5 34.Nfd3 Bf6, followed by Ng5 and e4.

33...Bf6 34.Ne5 de5 35.Rc2

If 35.Nd3 Nf2! 36.Kf2 e4, with great advantage.

35...Rea7 36.Kg2 Ng5 37.Rd6 e4 38.Bf6 Kf6 39.Kf1

If 39.Rb6 Ra1 40.Re2 Nf3 41.Ra6 R7a6 42.ba6 Ne1 43.Re1 Re1 44.b5 Ra1 and Black wins. After 39.Rd1 Ra1 40.Rcc1 Rc1 41.Rc1 Ra2 42.Kf1 Rb2 43.Nc2 Nf3 44.Ke2 Ke5.

39...Ra1 40.Ke2

The best defense was 40.Rdc6!, but after 40...R7a4! 41.R2c4 Rb1 42.Rc1 Rc1 43.Rc1 Rb4 there are two pawns less.

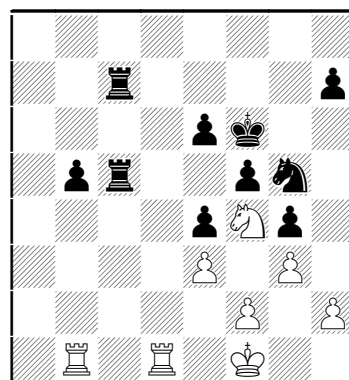
40...Rb1

Stronger was 40...Nf3! 41.Nf3 gf3 42.Kd2 R7a3 and White cannot avoid the fall of the pawn of f2.

41.Rd1 Rb4 42.Ng2 Rb5 43.Nf4

At the price of two pawns, Kramnik has activated his pieces, but his King is still victim of continuous threats.

43...Rc5 44.Rb2 b5 45.Kf1 Rac7 46.Rbb1



White intends to avoid the exchange of one rook, because of the remaining black Rook should inner in the second or first rank generating deadly threats. Carlsen gives: 46.Kg2 Rc1 47.Rc1 Rc1 48.Rb5 Nf3 49.Ne2 Re1 50.Rb2 Kg5 arriving to a curious position where White has not defense against the advance up to h3.

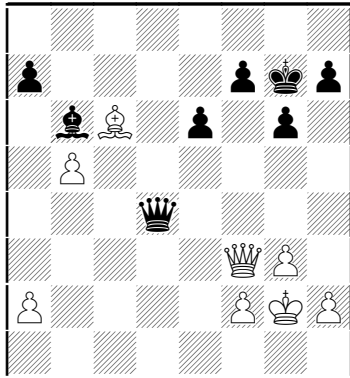
46...Rb7 47.Rb4 Rc4 48.Rb2 b4 49.Rdb1

Nf3 50.Kg2 Rd7! 51.h3 e5 52.Ne2 Rd2

53.hg4 fg4 54.Rd2 Nd2 55.Rb2 Nf3

56.Kf1 b3 57.Kg2 Rc2 0:1.

Brynell S. : Carlsen M.
Gausdal 2005



32...f5!

With the pressure on f2 and controlling of the dark squares, the Norwegian starts to build the jail for the white King.

33.Qe2 e5 34.Bb7 e4 35.Bc6 Kf6 36.Bb7 Ke5

Centralizing the King something that White is not able to do.

37.Bc6 g5 38.Bb7 g4!

Finishing the lock.

39.Bc6 h5 40.Be8?

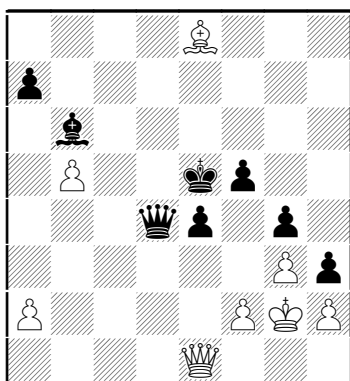
Allowing the following advance.

Necessary was to search for some space with 40.h4!?

40...h4! 41.Qe1

If 41.g4 f4! wins.

41...h3



Reducing even more the space of the white King.

42.Kg1 Qb2 43.Bc6

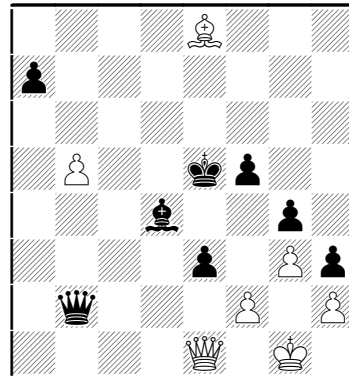
43.a4 e3!

43...Qa2 44.Bb7 Qb2 45.Bc6 Bd4

46.Be8?

More resistance should offer 46.Kf1, but after 46...Kd6!, with idea of ...a5!, Black wins.

46...e3!



47.Kf1 Kf6 48.Qe2 Qc1 49.Qe1 Qe1

It would be more handsome 49...e2!

50.Ke2 Qc4 51.Kd1 Qb3 52.Ke2 Qf3

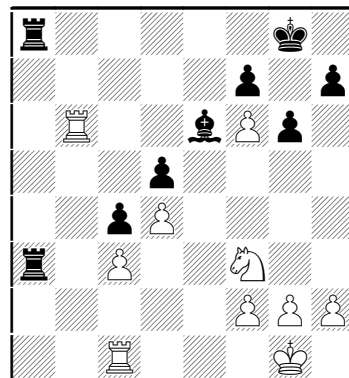
53.Kf1 Bc3 and the white Queen falls.

50.Ke1 ef2 51.Kf1 f4! 52.gf4 Kf5 53.Bf7 Kf4

Followed by ...Kg5 and Be5–h2. **0:1.**

Carlsen M. : Aronian L.

Elista 2007



White has a pawn up in f6, but Black has counterplay on the pawn on c3. However the most important point in the position is the little mobility of the black King.

31.h4!

Bringing air to the King and starting the offensive in the right side.

31...h6 32.Ne5 Ra1

It was better 32...Rb3, but after 33.Rd6!

Raa3 34.Rd8 Kh7 35.Nd7! Bd7 36.Rd7 g5

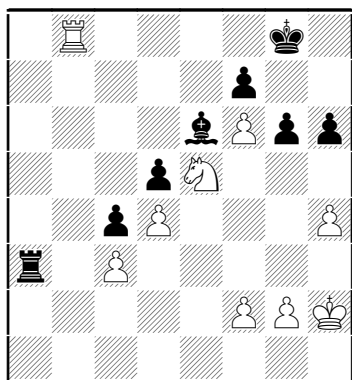
37.h5! the siege around the King wins.

33.Ra1 Ra1 34.Kh2 Ra3

It seems that the counterplay of Black has fructified because the pawn of c3 is going to fall letting free the pawn in c4.

Nevertheless, the captive King shall suffer the attack of the well coordinated white forces.

35.Rb8!

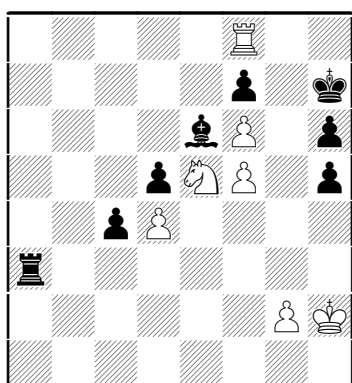


It is not correct to exchange the minor pieces; the endgame should be draw after 35.Ng6? fg6 36.Re6 Rc3 37.Re5 Kf7 38.Rd5 Kf6.

35...Kh7 36.f4!

After 36.Rf8? Rc3 37.Nf7 Bf7 38.Rf7 Kg8 39.Rd7 (39.Rg7 Kf8 40.Rg6 Rd3 and Black is not worse as Carlsen) 39...Rd3 40.Rd5 Kf7 Black should be very active.

36...Rc3 37.h5! gh5 38.Rf8 Ra3 39.f5!



The White strategy lied in this advance. Now the pawn of f7 falls without changing the strong white Knight.

39...Bf5 40.Rf7 Kg8 41.Rg7 Kf8 42.Rb7

The black monarch is again trapped, after which the retreat of the Rook is obliged.

42...Ra8 43.Kg3!

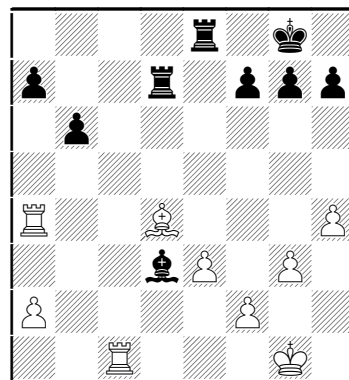
Adding the King to the battle.

43...Rd8 44.Kf4 Be4 45.g3 c3 46.Rf7 Kg8

47.Rg7 Kf8 48.Nd7 Rd7 49.Rd7 1:0.

Carlsen M. : Tiviakov S.

Crete 2007



With even material and different colors Bishops Black has right to draw. However he did not take in account that his King is going to be imprisoned for the White pawns and pieces. Carlsen uses the same technique that in the previous examples: advance of the pawns in the kingside winning space and restricting the opponent King.

33.g4

Starting the advance!

33...h6

Worth of consideration were 33...f5!? or 33...f6.

34.f3 Kh7 35.Kf2 Ree7 36.Ra3! Bb5

37.Rac3

Avoiding simplification.

37...Rd8 38.Kg3 f6 39.f4

White continues the advance and Black Monarch starts to feel some claustrophobic.

39...h5 40.g5 Kg6

40...fg5 41.hg5 should not free the Black King.

41.Rb1 Rd5 42.Rc8 Be8 43.Rbc1 f5?!

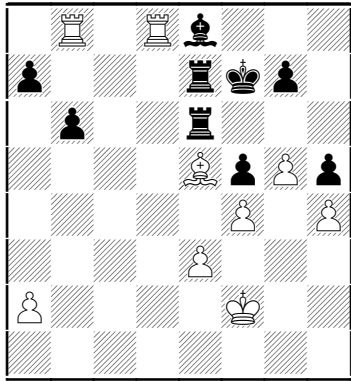
Giving up all the black squares.

44.Rb8 Rd6

44...Bb5!

45.Rcc8 Rde6 46.Be5 Kf7 47.Rd8 Kg6

48.Kf2 Kf7?



It was necessary to move the Bishop and keep the King in g6.

49.e4!

Taking profit of the mistake and incorporating this pawn to the assault.

49...Kg6

It was not possible 49...fe4?, because of 50.Bd6 e3 51.Ke1 Rd7? (51...Rd6!) 52.Rd7 Bd7 53.Rf8 Kg6 54.f5, wins.

50.Bd6 Rd7 51.Rd7 Bd7 52.e5

Carlsen has earned a passed pawn while keeping in jail the black King. It is difficult for Black to defend the queenside pawns.

52...Bc6

If 52...Re8 53.Rb7 Be6 54.Ra7 Rc8 55.a3, with clear advantage.

53.Rc8 Be8

53...Bd5 54.a3 a6 55.Rb8 b5 56.Ke3 the King goes to b6 and takes all the pawns.

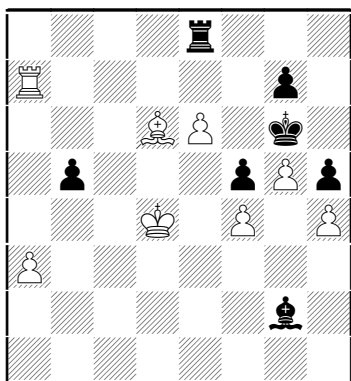
54.Ra8 Bf7

If 54...a5 55.Ra6 taking the pawn.

55.Ra7 Re8 56.a3 Bd5

If 56...Rc8 57.Bc7.

57.Ke3 b5 58.Kd4 Bg2 59.e6!



The pawn gives its place to the Bishop to

build a net of mate. Note that the black King is confined to g6.

59...Re6

After 59...Kh7 60.Be5 Rg8 61.Bg7! Rg7 62.Rg7 Kg7 63.Kc5 followed by Kd6 and the advance of the pawns wins.

60.Be5 Kh7 61.Rg7 Kh8 62.Re7 1:0.

Conclusion

To lock the King of the opponent is a method of fight in the endgame. Usually this objective can be got through the advance of the pawns and the coordinated actions of the remaining pieces.

The coaches have a good opportunity to promote the study of the endgame among the young players motivating them with the study of the endgames of the new World Champion.